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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002447

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/03/2026

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SUBJECT: EU INVITES TURKEY TO OPEN ACQUIS CHAPTER

REF: A. ANKARA 1479

[1](#)B. ANKARA 2053

Classified by Polcouns Janice Weiner; reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: The EU has invited the GOT to open negotiations on the Education and Culture chapter of the EU acquis, without requiring Turkey to first make progress on political reforms. The invitation resolves, for now, a dispute over a French-led proposal that would have attached political benchmarks to the chapter. Contacts say, however, that the dispute could re-emerge later in the accession process. End Summary.

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EU Sets Aside Benchmarks, For Now  
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[1](#)2. (U) The government of EU term president Austria submitted a letter to the GOT April 26 inviting Turkey to submit its negotiating position on the Education and Culture chapter, without setting any benchmarks for the GOT to meet before negotiations begin.

[1](#)3. (U) Austria sent the letter immediately following an EU Permreps meeting on enlargement. At the meeting, Permreps debated the French-led proposal to require that Turkey make progress on political reforms before opening the chapter (reftel A). Member states are sharply divided over the proposal, which would mark a departure from past EU practice. Traditionally, candidate states proceed on separate tracks toward the Copenhagen Criteria, which set broad standards of human rights and democracy, and the acquis, an 80,000-page document divided into 33 chapters establishing detailed legal/regulatory requirements in numerous fields. The minutes of the Permreps meeting state that some member states favor the idea of attaching political criteria as benchmarks for acquis chapters "where relevant," while others maintain that the Copenhagen Criteria should only be raised in connection with the closely related acquis chapter on Judiciary and Fundamental Rights.

[1](#)4. (C) EU contacts in Ankara told us the result of the Permreps meeting is that EU member states have agreed not to

attach political benchmarks to the opening of the Education and Culture chapter, but failed to resolve the broader dispute over the concept of setting political benchmarks to various acquis chapters. "We did what we always do," shrugged a Dutch diplomat. "We postponed the debate over a difficult issue." As a result, contacts said, some EU members could try to attach political benchmarks to other chapters, or even use them as conditions for closing the Education and Culture chapter.

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Decision Dampens Mutual Criticism  
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15. (C) Ahmet Dogan, political affairs director at the GOT's Secretariat General for EU Affairs, told us the invitation to

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open the Education chapter, combined with the recent GOT announcement of a new reform package (reftel B), has helped dampen the mutual criticism that had been mounting between Turkey and the EU. Nevertheless, he said, each side continues to question the other's sincerity. To illustrate his point, he showed us a cartoon from the Turkish magazine Kriter -- it portrays Turkey as an elderly, overweight woman frantically applying makeup while a man representing the EU gazes disinterestedly in the opposite direction.

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Chapter Could be Completed Shortly  
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16. (U) Dogan said the GOT has nearly completed its negotiating position on the Education chapter, which it will soon submit to the EU. He said it is possible that negotiations on the chapter could be opened, and maybe

ANKARA 00002447 002 OF 002

completed, in time for the next Turkey-EU Intergovernmental Council in June. However, the debate over the French-led proposal has delayed the process, and the EU might not be able to complete the chapter by June. The Education chapter will be the second chapter to be opened. Negotiations on the Science and Research chapter, the first to be opened, should be completed by June, Dogan said. The Austrian DCM told us he also expects negotiations on the Science chapter to be completed before the Austrian presidency ends in June, and that the Education chapter might also be completed by that time.

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